

Spring 2009

COUNTY CLIPS

A Newsletter for Employees of Contra Costa County

SPOTLIGHT ON

The Assessor's Office

See page 6



Anupama Bhalla and Tni Jackson, Certified Appraisers, meet with a property owner

2009 A Year of Change & Opportunity



By Supervisor Bonilla

Now that we are well on our way through 2009, we are finding ourselves and our county in an unprecedented and difficult situation. The recession is hitting all of

us hard. Most of us are feeling the crunch personally, and the impacts on us as a county are becoming increasingly apparent. Contra Costa County employees are working harder than ever in an effort to continually improve service delivery to the county's residents, while at the same time experiencing higher caseloads and an increase of people needing assistance. We struggle to remain a cohesive and strong performing organization while adapting to the cuts we are experiencing at the state level.

One bright light is the opportunity that federal stimulus money may provide to our county the ability to save jobs and to help maintain funding to our core and essential programs. Last month I met with members of our local Congressional delegation to encourage their direct assistance in securing the funding needed to keep many of our important programs and services within the county in place. County departments are in the process of reviewing information in preparation to determine what funding may be available and what the funds may be used for.

My colleagues on the Board, and I, are maintaining communication with our state and federal legislators to inform them of our growing needs at the county level, as well as to be sure we are in the position to accept dollars for projects we already have in place.

It is also important to develop good communication strategies within our organization so that we can work more effectively with our limited resources. We now rely even more on our shared mission and our commitment to continue delivering services to the public. Thank you for continuing to shoulder the burden of the increased needs we see in our community.

Employee & Manager of the Year

At the March 3, 2009 Board of Supervisor's meeting, Sandra Brown, Account Clerk-Advanced Level, Office of the Sheriff, was named the 2008 Gina Martin Employee of the Year. Wanda Session, Health Services Administrator, Health Services Department, was named as the 2008 Gina Martin Manager of the Year.

The Employee of the Year and Manager of the Year Awards were established by the Board of Supervisors to recognize the County's most valuable resource, its employees. These awards provide employees of Contra Costa

County with the opportunity to be recognized for exemplifying the best in public service through excellence in their work.



The Gina Martin Employee of the Year Nominees from left to right: Kate Sibley, LAFCO, Debra Laughlin, Department of Conservation and Development, Sandra Brown, Office of the Sheriff, Linda Barbero, Contra Costa County Library, Nick Dragisich, Employment and Human Services Department, Elizabeth Garcia, Health Services Department, Marie Estrada, General Services Department, and Joellen Waters, Public Works Department.



The Gina Martin Manager of the Year Nominees from left to right: Elise Warren, Office of the Sheriff, Seng Lovan, Contra Costa County Library, Gladys Scott Reid, Human Resources Department, Stephen Baiter, Employment and Human Services Department, Stan Burton, General Services Department, Wanda Session, Health Services Department, Michael Angelo Silva, Department of Conservation and Development, Lisa Driscoll, County Administrator's Office, Neil Leary, Public Works Department, and Joslyn Mitchell, Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office.

The awards were renamed several years ago to the Gina Martin Employee and the Gina Martin Manager of the Year awards in honor of Gina Martin who was a long time member of our County family. Ms. Martin, Chief Clerk – Board of Supervisors, passed

away in 2003 after fighting a courageous battle with cancer. Gina embodied the characteristics of our Mission, Vision, and Values Statement; the criteria for both awards.

Congratulations to both the winners and all the nominees.



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Recommendations Please

County Clips is your employee newsletter. Please send us your comments, questions & suggestions.

You can contact us at (925) 313-1180

or email us at cwamp@contracostatv.org.

Remember, County Clips can be viewed online at www.contracosta.ca.gov under County Clips.

In many ways, our current economic situation echoes the opening lines of *A Tale of Two Cities*. We have opportunities to review the way we do things, while at the same time recognizing that many around us are suffering. The one thing that is constant is that we need to change. So what does this mean? To some it means how we provide services to our constituents will have to be done in a different way. To others it means we will have to rely on others to carry out services we can no longer afford to provide. And to some it will mean that services will no longer be provided.



David Twa, County Administrator

All of us realize that as President Obama stated "the ground has shifted beneath us." It is a time that most of us have never seen before and fewer yet have had to deal with. Our employees have started down the path to deal with these issues, cutting costs, increasing productivity, and coming up with new and different ways to provide essential services to the public. Many simple things have become more important. Double sided copying, eliminating newsletters, turning off lights, or making fewer trips have all help reduced costs.

"It was the best of times, It was the worst of times"

Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

Departments are also looking at more long term solutions, such as

greater use of technology, streamlining reporting requirements, or consolidation of functions. Many of these solutions will take time and constant effort by all involved to really achieve savings, but they will be worth it. We have great employees who understand the commitment to delivering quality services to the public. Even though the path through the current economic crisis will be long and difficult we need to keep our focus on the goal of providing critical services to the public. I know we can do it.



Summer Reading 2009:

Be Creative at Your Library

June 8 – August 17

Add a little flair to your summer! Join the Contra Costa County Library's Summer Reading Program June 8 – August 17. There are programs for all age groups from infants to school aged children to adults. Get ready for a colorful summer full of interesting books, thrilling prizes and special events. For more information or to get started, please contact your community library or visit us online at ccclib.org.

Canine Partner Helps Protect Contra Costa from Exotic Organisms



*Above: County Biologist/ Canine Handler, Mariah Slusser, with her sidekick Bart next to some smuggled citrus”
Right: “Bart can detect fruit and plant material even on the top shelf of a UPS truck.*



The Agricultural Department has two canine inspection teams that work regionally under contract in counties throughout the Bay Area. The teams are USDA trained to detect plant material shipped through carriers such as UPS and FedEx that may contain quarantine plant material or exotic pests. This program protects not only agriculture, but backyard gardens and the California environment from introduced exotic organisms that have the potential to cause great harm. Most pests in California, such as Argentine ant, European brown garden snail and the European earwig were inadvertently introduced into California.

Recently, County Agricultural Biologist Mariah Slusser and Bart (her detector dog) were performing an inspection at FedEx in Concord. While working the conveyor belt Bart hit on an unmarked box going to a private individual in a close by Contra Costa County city. Though it is not unusual for Bart to find unmarked parcels containing plant material and contraband, this box contained about 15 pounds of cut branches, foliage and grasses. It had been shipped by a business in Miami, Florida that specialized in voodoo and other occult religious supplies. The plant material, which appeared to have been collected from the wild, had leaf damage and was highly infested with a variety of live insect pests.

There were so many live pests and plants that were unfamiliar to the California inspectors that it took two Biologists six hours to carefully inspect and prepare 92 suspect samples. These samples were sent to the diagnostic laboratories operated by the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The net result was 17 live insect species of concern and 3 live plants of concern that were not known to occur in California. Any one of these serious exotic insect pests or plants had the potential to establish in California wreaking havoc on California’s agriculture and environment. The local USDA Smuggling, Interdiction and Trade Compliance Team were notified and they are continuing the investigation.

One of the insects was the high-threat targeted exotic ant whose common name is Little Fire Ant. It is native to South America and has been inadvertently introduced into Hawaii where it causes serious problems to both agriculture and homeowners. This ant’s sting is extremely painful and causes long-lasting intense itching. The Little Fire Ant climbs into trees and shrubs where it builds nests. If disturbed it rains down in large numbers stinging skin, eyes and gets under clothing. It has been reported that in heavily infested areas, agricultural workers can’t prune or harvest crops because of this pest.

“I am so proud of Bart and am continually amazed at how efficient and accurate he is in finding plant material and contraband,” said Mariah, Bart’s handler.

News for CCHP Members



Contra Costa Health Plan (CCHP) has developed a new online service called the Online Search Engine (OSE) that makes it easier for its members to find a health care provider, pharmacy or facility. Plan Members can now search for more than 1,300 contracted health care providers. The OSE lists details about each provider and search results are integrated with Google Maps to help members with directions to the provider’s office.

To access the OSE, visit www.contracostahealthplan.org. For more information, contact Tracy Ann Ealy at tealy@hdsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-9501.



How to Keep Your Landscape Alive with Limited Water

Keeping landscapes alive, even during droughts, adds to home and neighborhood values. Trees provide shade and reduce energy costs. Shrubs provide privacy and filter dust from busy streets. Perennials provide color, fragrance and pollen for beneficial insects.

Saving trees and shrubs should be your top priority. Once in late spring and again in early summer, slow soak the soil-under the drip line to an 18" depth (use a probe or shovel to test). If water flows off, stop, wait several hours and water again.

Lawns, annuals and vegetable gardens are "water hogs" due to shallow root systems. Many lawn varieties can survive with little summer water. They become dormant and then green up with winter rains. Vegetable gardens and annuals can be replaced when water is more plentiful. If keeping these plants alive is your priority, only water when plants are on the verge of wilting. Water to a 10" depth in early mornings.

Additional tips:

Prevent weeds from becoming established. They take water and nutrients from the soil, competing with landscape plants.

Mulch (a must!) your garden to a 4" depth to retain moisture and reduce weeds. Keep mulches 4-6" away from tree trunks and shrubs to minimize rodent damage and root rots. Use organic (wood chips and bark) or inorganic materials, (rock and recycled rubber). Organic mulches add nutrients to the soil as they break down.

Check and repair leaks in all irrigation systems.

Turn off automatic sprinklers. Water only when necessary.

Do not prune or fertilize unless necessary. Both practices stimulate new growth that requires more water.

For more information call the Master Gardener Hot line Monday - Friday from 9-12;

925 646-6586, or email mgcontracosta@ucdavis.edu

Businesses, Firefighters, Civicorps, Oakland Zoo

All Benefit from Neighborhood Defensible Space Work Days

"Fuel reduction and vegetation management are usually the most immediate and effective measures homeowners can take to protect themselves and their property," said Contra Costa County Fire Marshal Richard Carpenter. "Any time after November until the fire season starts again in June is the time for homeowners to take actions that will help firefighters effectively combat an approaching fire."

About 50 local landscape contractors gathered February 10 at a Rossmoor club house to learn from county fire officials about defensible space that can protect homes from wildfire. The program was coordinated by the non-profit Diablo Fire Safe Council.

The next two days, a Civicorps crew trained at the workshop practiced their new skills on Bernhard Avenue, some of the 6,000 parcels designated as Priority Hazard Zones for wildfire by the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. Priority Hazard Zones are based on proximity to open space, topography, degree of slope, density of homes, amount of vegetation (both native and ornamental), lack of emergency vehicle accessibility, and other conditions favorable to fast-moving and destructive fires.

Landscape workers used chain saws, hand tools, chippers and dump trucks to reduce the fuel load surrounding the structures. The Bernhard Avenue residents who got help protecting their homes also helped Oakland Zoo animals by donating the truckloads of acacia branches for food and enrichment. The animals at the Oakland Zoo benefit from donations of fruits, vegetables, branches (browse) and leaves, both for food and fun "toys."

This project was made possible by a generous grant from Fireman's Fund Insurance Company to increase defensible space in Contra Costa County, and by the community organization efforts of resident Barbara Whipperman and the partnership of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (www.cccfpd.org), Civicorps Schools (www.ebcc-school.org), the Diablo Fire Safe Council (www.diablofiresafe.org) and the Oakland Zoo (www.oaklandzoo.org).



Prevention Specialist Eric Stessel (standing, left) with a Civicorps work crew helped four homeowners get more defensible space in their neighborhood on Bernhard Avenue in February.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE COUNTY ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

Gus Kramer has served as the County Assessor since January of 1995, and he is responsible for directing a staff of over 120 employees. The main function of the Assessor's Office is to assess property for tax purposes. The Assessor's Office maintains records and appraisal information for over 355,000 taxable parcels in Contra Costa County. The tax base for the 2008-09 assessment roll totaled \$159.8 billion dollars. The following is a percentage breakdown of the tax base contribution by dollar volume and parcel count.

PROPERTY TYPE	DOLLAR VOLUME%	PARCEL COUNT%
Residential	76.20%	93.99%
Commercial	11.75%	4.31%
Land	1.36%	1.03%
Industrial	10.69%	.67%

The Assessor's Office staff includes appraisers, auditor-appraisers, real property technical assistants, computer aided drafting operators, and administrative, clerical and technical support staff. This dedicated group of employees has assisted thousands of taxpayers with questions about changes in ownership and/or new construction that may trigger a reassessment, and current declines in property values that may result in a reduction in a taxpayer's property tax bill. Our mission is to educate the public about when and how property is valued, and to provide them with information regarding the overall assessment process, property characteristics, property ownership, supplemental assessments, property boundary features, and the assessment appeal process.



From left to right: Sandy Williams, Local Exemptions Department, assists one of our County's many disabled veterans. Computer Aided Drafting Operator, Jennifer Nunnally, reviews a parcel map book. Contra Costa County Assessor's Office maintains over 11,700 parcel maps. Tony Fiorica, Associate Appraiser, reviews residential building plans.



County Assessor, Gus Kramer, speaks to the Delta Chapter Women's Council as part of the Assessor's Office Public Service Outreach Program which is a free service to help educate the public about the Assessor's Office and about tax saving measures that are available.

What you might not know is that there are a number of voter-approved propositions that exclude property reassessments. Summarized below are some of the more popular propositions that taxpayers are taking advantage of during these tough economic times.

Proposition 8

With the current downturn in the real estate market, the Assessor's Office has received many requests from property owners for a temporary reduction in the assessed value of their property. This assessment review is possible under Proposition 8, which authorizes the Assessor to temporarily lower the assessed value of any real property when it is greater than the market value as of the January 1, lien date. If you have evidence that the market value of your property as of January 1, 2009, is less than the assessed value, you can request a Proposition 8 review by printing and completing the 2009-10 Request for Value Review (Prop 8) form from the Assessor's Office website at: www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/assr/assr.htm. Once you have completed the form, either mail or FAX the form to:

Office of the Assessor
2530 Arnold Drive, Suite 100
Martinez, CA 94553-4359
FAX: (925) 313-7488



Please note that this Prop 8 review is FREE!! We are aware of several businesses that will download the above Prop 8 review form, complete it for a property owner and charge the property owner a \$95.00 processing fee. Again, the Assessor's Office provides this service for FREE.



Proposition 58 and 193

Under Proposition 58 and 193, the transfer of the principal place of residence (and up to \$1 million of any other real property) between parents and children (Proposition 58) or from grandparents to grandchildren when the natural parent is deceased (Proposition 193) is excluded from reappraisal if an application is filed within three (3) years of the transfer date or before the property has sold to a third party. The inheritance is not re-appraised and therefore taxes are not re-assessed when title is transferred.

Proposition 60

Proposition 60 is a one-time transfer of the Proposition 13 tax base for a senior citizen who elects to downsize from a bigger house to a smaller dwelling when moving within the county. The requirements for this exclusion include the following:

At the date of transfer of the original property, the transferor (seller) must be at least 55 years of age. (If married, only one spouse must be at least 55, but must reside in the residence; if co-owned, only one co-owner must be at least 55 and must reside in the residence.)

The replacement residence must be purchased or newly constructed within two (2) years before or after the sale of the original residence.

The replacement residence must be "equal to or lesser" in market value than the original residence.

The claimant and/or claimant's spouse can only be granted relief under this section once.

To learn more about the Assessor's Office and the services we provide to the public, and to obtain information and details regarding the above Propositions, please visit our website at: www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/assr/assr.htm.

Gus Kramer invites you to call the Assessor's Office at (925) 313-7400 for any assistance or information you need regarding property tax issues. If you come to our public service counter at 2530 Arnold Drive, Suite 100, in Martinez, there is a good chance you will get to meet Gus personally, as he enjoys working with and helping the public each and every day.

Above: Wendy Page, Public Service Clerk, assists a taxpayer at the Assessor's Public Service counter. In the month of March, 2009, the Assessor's Office answered over 5,839 public service telephone calls and assisted over 720 taxpayers at our Public Service counter.

Health Services & Sheriff's Office Partner for Security Exercise

Contra Costa Health Services' (CCHS) Public Health Division and the Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services recently collaborated on a full-scale exercise to test security plans for the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). The SNS is a federal cache of medicines and supplies that are used in the event of a catastrophic health emergency. The Mutual Aid Mobile Field Force (MAMFF), which is comprised of dozens of local law enforcement personnel, practiced defending the supplies from would-be rioters during simulated scenarios in which attempts were made to forcefully commandeer the cache.



Captain Donny Gordon with the Sheriff's Emergency Services Division at the Security Exercise.

More than 200 people took part in the exercise, including staff from CCHS, the Sheriff's Office, the General Services Department, MAMFF, members of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) and volunteers from the public. About 15 representatives from other law enforcement jurisdictions throughout the state observed the exercise. CCHS Emergency Services Manager Kim Cox said the exercise, which was the first of its kind in Northern California, was a great learning experience for all agencies involved.

To find out more about upcoming Health Emergency drills and exercises, contact Kim Cox at kcox@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6648.

County Homeless Outreach Effort

More than a dozen local, county and state agencies took part in a recent major homeless outreach effort concentrating in the North Concord and Pacheco areas. County departments included the County Administrator's Office, the Public Works Department, the Office of the Sheriff, the Probation Department, the Animal Services Department and Contra Costa Health Services. Late last year, outreach teams started contacting and engaging some 50-60 homeless people in 15 encampments. The homeless were offered shelters and a variety of mental health and drug treatment services. "The goal of the homeless program is to end homelessness," said Cynthia Belon, Director of the Contra Costa Public Health Homeless Program. "All of our services and housing programs are structured to end homelessness for homeless residents of our community and not to simply manage homeless people."

Early this year the outreach effort intensified due to the increasing health and safety issues in the area and concern for homeless residing there. Homeless people living in the identified areas were notified of these risks and informed of available shelters, detox and residential treatment programs



County Public Works, city of Concord Public Works and Caltrans crews clean up a former encampment

along with other resources. On February 20, 2009, Officers from the Concord Police Department and East Bay Regional Park Police and Deputies from the Sheriff's Office posted notices for the homeless to vacate within 72 hours. On February 24, 2009, staff from County Public Works, city of Concord Public Works and Caltrans cleaned up the encampments. All of the homeless in these areas were provided with information on available services.

This multi-agency effort was the second one with the last operation four years ago. Belon said the Homeless Program tries to identify the best permanent housing placement for each homeless person based on where they want to

live in an effort to integrate them into the community. "We also provide multi-disciplinary teams to offer services in their housing and over time connect them to resources in the community to continue to assist them in stabilization and becoming part of the mainstream community."

Some 3,000 homeless people have received housing since 2004, when the County Board of Supervisors approved a 10-year plan to end homelessness. Contra Costa County is known nationally for showing a significant decrease in the number of homeless (38% from 2005 to 2007 and 8% from 2007 to 2009). As a result of this latest outreach effort, 11 homeless people were placed into the emergency shelter in Concord.

Volunteers Needed for Project Homeless Connect

Help people who are experiencing homelessness by volunteering at Homeless Connect on June 17 in Richmond. The annual, one-day, one-stop shop event offers a variety of services to people experiencing homelessness by connecting them with benefits, medical care, substance abuse and mental health counseling, social services, housing and shelter. Both service providers and other volunteers are needed. The event runs 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday, June 17, at the Richmond Memorial Auditorium, 403 Civic Center Street. For more information, visit <http://www.cchealth.org/groups/homeless/> or contact the Contra Costa Health Services Homeless Program at ProjectHomelessConnect@hscd.cccounty.us or call 925-313-6124.



Best Practice Strategies from Co-Parenting to Supervised Visitation

Department of Child Support Services Engaging Fathers Conference

A year-long planning process involving several county agencies and organizations with diverse perspectives produced a thought-provoking conference in January. One-hundred eighty attendees spent the day thinking about the 'why now' and 'why bother' of father engagement, exploring the benefits for children of positive father involvement and the strategies to engage them.

Setting the stage for dialogue in the opening session, nationally recognized experts continued with more in-depth analysis and dialogue in workshop settings. Yale clinical psychology professor, popular speaker and author Kyle Pruett, Ph.D., presented research and examples validating the critical role fathers play in their children's lives and introduced the nation's only research-based fatherhood program, Supporting Father Involvement. The program currently operates in Contra Costa through the Service Integration Program and in four other California counties. Oliver Williams, Ph.D, a University of Minnesota professor and director of the Institute on Domestic

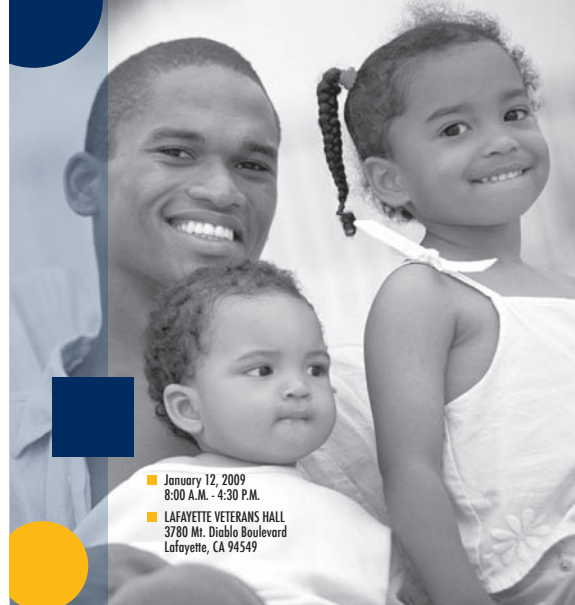
"I will pay more attention to fathers in my caseload and look forward to involving them in more of the decisions." Child Welfare Worker

Violence in the African American Community, demonstrated that the best predictor that a father will have a good relationship with his children is the quality of his relationship with the mother of his children. He described how collaborative co-parenting might look, particularly if the relationship is abusive, and how parents could measure their children's well-being. At the end of the day, local experts pulled it all together in a panel presentation highlighting strengths and service gaps in Contra Costa. The facilitator for the day was Jennifer Rose, LMSW, a national consultant providing technical assistance on family violence, visitation, and community organizing.

Attendees appreciated "approaching issues from the child's perspective," "encouraging healthy fathering versus fatherhood at all cost" and "the importance of keeping fathers connected and involved." A child welfare worker stated, "I will pay more attention to fathers in my caseload and look forward to involving them in more of the decisions." Others said that they would conduct an assessment of their agencies' father friendliness, and several

ENGAGING FATHERS

Best Practice Strategies from Co-Parenting to Supervised Visitation



January 12, 2009
8:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.
LAFAYETTE VETERANS HALL
3780 Mt. Diablo Boulevard
Lafayette, CA 94549

intend to place more emphasis on fathers, share information, incorporate new ideas and collaborate with other programs.

Discussion to develop future training, networking and capacity-building opportunities continues among conference partners Zero Tolerance for Domestic Violence, Department of Child Support Services, Service Integration Program, Contra Costa's Child Abuse Prevention Council and First Five, with support from the Greater Bay Area Child Abuse Prevention Council Coalition and Strategies.

For more information contact Pual Buddenhagen at 925-313-1193 or pbuddenh@ehsd.cccounty.us



"Where's My Backpack??"

For the past eight years Project Ready to Learn, a collaboration between our VESTIA and the Contra Costa Times, has been helping to answer that question for children in the EHSD system. Working closely with service groups and generous donors we provided over 2,000 backpacks to our EHSD children in 2008, and we hope to meet or exceed those numbers in 2009! Project Ready to Learn runs from August 1st through Labor Day collecting new backpacks (filled or empty) and supplies. To find out how you can participate or to donate a backpack or supplies, please contact Anne Struthers at 925-521-5062.

Making Every Food Dollar Count



Eating healthy doesn't have to be expensive or take a lot of time. Planning ahead is the key. Follow the simple steps below to save money and time:

Plan your meals and snacks around foods that are on sale, in season, and what you already have on hand. Try to plan for at least one week.

Consider eating more meals at home and/or pack your lunch.

- Make a shopping list from your meal plan.
- Clip and attach money saving coupons.
- Bring your grocery store discount cards.

When you shop, make substitutions and/or stock up as needed to save even more money (buy unadvertised specials, generic brands, and 2-for-1 specials).

Be aware of the extra cost of convenience foods. For example-buying a carton of oatmeal provides 30 servings vs. buying 3 boxes of instant oatmeal containing 10 packets each: save \$5.50.

Read food labels to check the nutrition facts and ingredients to help make healthier food choices among similar products.

Look for "sell by or use by date" and buy the freshest food possible.

Watch those "impulse buys" of food and beverages displayed at the end of aisles or at the checkout counter, such as soda, cookies, chips, and candy.

Did you know? UC Cooperative Extension partners with the EHS Department's Job Readiness Program to teach participants skills to plan, purchase, and prepare low-cost, nutritious meals. We also offer train-the-trainer workshops on a financial literacy education curriculum for limited income families. You can find more information about our program at <http://cecontracosta.ucdavis.edu>

DTV Transition Date Changed to June 12, 2009

At midnight on June 12, 2009, federal law requires that all full-power television broadcast stations stop broadcasting in analog format (signal received by antenna) and broadcast only in digital format.



Will My Analog TV Still Work?

If you have an analog TV and already subscribe to cable or satellite service, contact your provider about any additional components, such as a digital set-top box, that you may need to watch digital broadcast programming.

To contact Comcast for up to three digital adapters at no additional cost per household:

Call 1-877-634-4434 or Go To www.comcast.com/digitalnow

To contact Astound Broadband customer service:

Call 1-800-427-8686

After June 12, 2009, you will only be able to receive and view over-the-air digital programming with an analog TV by purchasing a digital-to-analog set-top converter box. Until July 31, 2009, all U.S. households will be able to request up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, to be used toward the purchase of eligible digital-to-analog converter boxes.

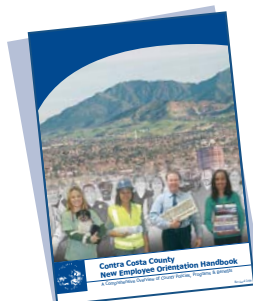
For more information about converters and coupons:

Call 1-888-388-2009 (voice English and Spanish) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY) or Go To www.dtv2009.gov

For more information about the digital transition or to speak with an FCC representative:

Call 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) (voice English and Spanish) or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) (TTY) or Go To www.dtv.gov

Contra Costa County New Employee Handbook



The Contra Costa County New Employee Handbook is now Available Online on the County's Intranet site at:

http://intranet.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/hr/employee_handbook.htm



on Comcast VOD

Contra Costa Television's (CCTV's) programming is being featured on Comcast's popular signature Video-On-Demand (VOD) service. The CCTV programs available on VOD are free and include: "Town of Danville Welcomes Home Capt. Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger"; "Engaging Fathers"; "Career Exploration Forum in Manufacturing and Technology" and "Contra Costa USA." These four featured programs will air on Comcast's VOD until May 31, 2009. Comcast digital customers can view these programs on VOD by doing the following: select On-Demand; then Get Local; then select Public Affairs; then CCTV and then you click on the program you would like to watch. Look for more CCTV programming on Comcast's VOD service in the future. For more information about Comcast On-Demand, please call 1-800-COMCAST. For more information about CCTV programming, please visit the CCTV website at www.contracostatv.org



Above: AAA project. Left: Avalon Bay development project

CONTRA COSTA CENTRE *Redevelopment Projects Moving Forward*

Despite the economic down-turn, there continues to be major new construction in Contra Costa County. There are two major projects taking place in the Contra Costa Centre Redevelopment Area (near the Pleasant Hill Bart Station) that are being inspected by the Department of Conservation and Development. One of these projects is the Avalon Bay Development. This project has been in the works for approximately 10 years, and is a joint effort by Contra Costa County Redevelopment Agency, BART and Avalon Bay Communities, Inc. There are three separate mixed use buildings, housing 422 residential apartments, 100 for sale condominiums, 35,590 sq. ft. of local resident-serving retail space, 19,400 sq. ft. of business conference center and 270,000 sq. ft. of office space. The cost of this project is approximately \$110 million and there are approximately 220 people working at the site on a daily basis.

Less than a block away, AAA is building a six-story office building and parking garage which will serve as its main headquarters (relocated from San Francisco). There were other cities being considered and we were very fortunate the County was able to convince AAA that this was the place to build. The office building is 241,798 sq. ft. with an occupant load of 3,177 and the cost for the project is approximately \$52 million. Rudolph and Sletten is the main contractor at the AAA site. They also have many sub contractors and have approximately 80 people working at the site daily.

Avalon Bay started in August, 2008, and is projected to be a four year project. AAA started in February, 2008, and is expected to be completed in July, 2009. Contra Costa County continues to be proactive in bringing businesses to the area and encouraging the growth and development in infill locations.

With the down-turn in the economy, Contra Costa County and the contractors and sub-contractors working on these projects are very fortunate to have these two major construction projects being built. County Building Inspectors stay very busy inspecting these projects. Inspectors spend approximately four hours a day at each site and often work weekends to help construction stay on schedule.

Recently Appointed Department Heads

Ted Cwiek Selected as Assistant County Administrator/Human Resources Director



The position of Assistant County Administrator and Human Resources Director for Contra Costa County was filled early this year with the selection of Ted J. Cwiek. Prior to coming to the County, Mr. Cwiek served as the Human Resources Director for El Dorado County, California and Macomb County, Michigan, where he personally directed labor negotiations on behalf of the counties.

In addition to his knowledge and experience as a county human resources professional, Mr. Cwiek brings particular expertise in labor relations, contract administration and employment law. A graduate of Wayne State University Law School in Detroit, Michigan, Mr. Cwiek spent the first several years of his professional career representing the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) as an associate of James P. Hoffa, its current President. He went on to practice law in the private sector, representing both management and unions before becoming an Assistant County Counsel and Labor Relations Director for Macomb County, Michigan.

Mr. Cwiek believes the current economic crisis presents new and serious challenges which will impact sector employment for years to come. He is confident however, that the County and its labor organizations will be able to resolve any outstanding issues and work together to continue to deliver outstanding service that the citizens of Contra Costa County have come to expect.

Ed Woo selected as Department of Information Technology Chief

On March 16, 2009, Ed Woo began his newly appointed position as the new Chief Information Officer and department head of the Contra Costa County Department of Information Technology (DOIT). Mr. Woo has been an employee of DOIT since April, 2001, when he was hired as a Network Analyst II working in the Wide Area Network Group. Shortly after joining DOIT, he was promoted to manage the Wide Area Network Group, Network Services Group, and Telecomm. In April, 2008, he promoted again to become Deputy Director of Communications and the Radio Group was also placed under his management.



Mr. Woo obtained his BSEE in December, 1985, from Cal Poly, Pomona. His undergraduate studies focused on digital and analog electronics engineering, microwave systems design, and industrial manufacturing technologies. Mr. Woo's professional work experience has focused on Computer Networking, Electronic and Mechanical Engineering, Telecommunications, and Wireless technologies. His most recent work experience just prior to joining the County was with a startup company Softline-US Inc. and Qwest Cyber Solution in Silicon Valley.

Mr. Woo's goal is to optimize county wide IT initiatives by leveraging our current systems and resources to their fullest and to reduce IT cost by developing new cost effective enterprise systems that increase productivity.



Speed Mentoring Takes-Off at PUBLIC WORKS

Last year, the Public Works Department held our first "Speed Mentoring" session. It was a very successful first attempt to bring mentors and potential mentees together during their lunch break to get to know one another. Since we started the Mentor Program two years ago, we have received feedback from employees that they didn't really know the mentors and weren't comfortable approaching them. Using the idea of "speed dating," all the speed sessions were only 5 minutes long, wherein each mentee sat with a mentor for 5 minutes before moving onto the next mentor. The 5 minutes began with each mentor giving a brief overview of their work history, or they talked about their mentoring experience; followed by the prospective mentee giving a summary of their education and work history, goals and/or aspirations, and asking questions of the prospective mentor. There were 30 attendees, so the noise level was a little challenging, but it was a lot of fun! More importantly, the mentees had an opportunity to talk to mentors that they may not have felt comfortable approaching before. Since Public Works started the program, we have doubled the amount of employees that have signed up to be mentors and we have received a lot of great feedback. If you want to learn more about the Public Works Department's Mentor Program, please contact Carrie Ricci at 313-2235.

Congratulations on a Job Well Done

Contra Costa Health Services' (CCHS') Environmental Health Division has added a new feature to its website to make it easier for people opening a restaurant or other food facility to check the status of their plan. "Plan Check Status" allows an applicant to quickly and easily find out if a plan is approved, rejected or still under review, and who is reviewing their plans. CCHS is the first county health department in California to offer this service on its website. As an indication of its success, the number of telephone calls regarding the status of plans has decreased by almost half since the launch of Plan Check Status. To access this service, visit www.cchealth.org.

Contra Costa Health Service' (CCHS') Hazardous Materials Program presented the 2008 Industrial Safety Ordinance (ISO) Report to the Board of Supervisors in December. There was not one major chemical accident or release at any of the petroleum refineries or chemical plants covered by the county's ISO for the year in 2008 for the first time since the ordinance took effect in 1999. The report highlighted the efforts made by the facilities, the community, the Board of Supervisors and CCHS' HazMat staff to reduce the number of incidents that occur. The ISO Report is available online at www.cchealth.org.

Congratulations to Contra Costa County Employees and voters who participated in a historical election on November 4, 2008. One hundred and forty-nine County employees volunteered to be poll workers in this historic election. Contra Costa County experienced the highest turnout (86.67%) for any election during the past 30 years. We exceeded the statewide turnout of 79.42%. Not only did Contra Costa County have the highest turnout of the top 15 counties in California, we were seventh in the state, which is unprecedented for a large county. Permanent vote-by-mail voters have increased from 6,600 in November, 2000, to just over 200,000 in 2008. For the first time in a Presidential Election, vote-by-mail (VBM) exceeded 50% of the total votes cast (51.23%). At the November 1980 Presidential Election, only 10.2% of the votes were cast by mail.

Community Services Bureau's (CSB's) Annual Give a Kid a Smile Day was a huge success! Six local dentists volunteered their time to help our community's children by setting up offices at five CSB centers including Balboa, Brookside, and George Miller III in Richmond, George Miller in Concord, and the Fairgrounds in Antioch. The dentists provided exams and fluoride varnish for 359 children. In addition, four dentists in our community opened their offices to provide treatment for 29 children.

Thanks to the dedicated CSB staff, the Children's Oral Health Program and the Contra Costa Dental Society for their commitment to healthy children and bright smiles!



Contra Costa Health Services' (CCHS') Emergency Medical Services Division is one of four agencies nationwide to receive lifesaving CPR technology. The FDA-cleared device, called the LUCAS Compression System, is strapped onto a patient's body and provides steady and effective CPR. The air-powered device delivers 100 compressions per minute, a rate recommended by the American Heart Association. CCHS has deployed 12 LUCAS devices to some of the busiest fire stations throughout the county. To find out more about the LUCAS chest compression system, visit www.cccems.org.

Supervisor Federal Glover was selected as one of the 2009 California State Association of Counties' (CSAC's) Executive Committee members representing urban counties. He was also selected as a CSAC Executive Committee 2009 Policy Committee Chair for the Administration of Justice Committee.

Supervisor John Gioia and Contra Costa Clerk-Recorder, Steve Weir, were two of 15 individuals that the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) recognized as recipients of the 2008 Circle of Service Awards. This award honors CSAC members whose service to CSAC and counties sets them apart.

